

PRESS RELEASE



The Cleveland Museum of Art

Public Relations / 11150 East Blvd. / Cleveland, Ohio 44106 / 216 421-7340

February 9, 1981

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EDUCATIONAL EXHIBITION AT THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART EXPLAINS THEMES AND TECHNIQUES OF CHINESE PAINTING

Chinese Painting: Themes and Techniques, The Cleveland Museum of Art educational exhibition prepared in conjunction with the major exhibition, Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting, opened on February 4 and remains on view through April 5. The major exhibition will be on view at the Museum from February 11 through March 29.

The support exhibition is designed to acquaint Western viewers with the fundamentals of Chinese painting. It focuses on themes frequently found in Chinese painting--landscapes, figures, pine, bamboo, and plum blossom; the tools and materials of the artist; brush techniques; and the artists' veneration of both nature and Chinese "old master" paintings.

Chinese Painting: Themes and Techniques comprises 40 photographic reproductions of works on view in the major exhibition, two album paintings (album paintings are generally kept with others between covers and used like a book of illustrations), and twenty objects commonly found in artists' studios, including brushes, ink cakes, ink stones, brush washers, brush rests, seals, and water droppers.

Chinese painting is a two-thousand-year-old artistic tradition, and is one of the greatest of all the world's arts. To Western viewers, however, Chinese painting may seem unusual because of the forms and materials, the tools, the particular methods of painting, and the conventions used by Chinese artists. Chinese artists treat distance, light and shadow, and the passage of time differently from Western artists. The Chinese painter is not only interested in aspects of nature under particular conditions of light and shadow but also attempts to paint the world in its typical and eternal aspects.

The three basic forms of Chinese painting are the hanging scroll, hung vertically

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on a wall; the handscroll, a form unique to Far Eastern painting, viewed by unrolling a small section at a time horizontally from right to left on a table; and the album leaf. These are done on either silk or paper and then reinforced and strengthened by a tough paper backing.

The brushes used by Chinese painters are the most sensitive and flexible instruments that have been developed in the whole of the painters craft. They are made from carefully selected hairs of the wolf, rabbit, goat, and other animals, bound together and inserted into a bamboo holder.

The Chinese artist uses ink made from pine soot mixed with glue and made into sticks. Many Chinese paintings are ink monochrome. The absence of color emphasizes the all important qualities of the brush strokes, and permits the artist to produce a wide variety of tones.

The educational guide, Chinese Painting: An Escape from the "Dusty" World, written by Marjorie Williams, assistant curator in the Museum's art history and education department and organizer of Chinese Painting: Themes and Techniques, serves to introduce essential painting concepts that are rooted in ancient Chinese philosophies and to explain the use of artists' tools, formats, themes, and techniques. The guide is published in The Cleveland Museum of Art's Themes in Art Series and will be available at the Museum Sales Desk.

All paintings illustrated in both the exhibition and guide are from the collections of the Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum and The Cleveland Museum of Art. Accessories of the artists' studios were lent to the Museum from private collections, including those of Mr. and Mrs. Severance A. Millikin, Mr. and Mrs. Wai-kam Ho, and Mr. and Mrs. Marc F. Wilson. The exhibition is supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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